



MICHIGAN HEALTH & HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

Advocating for hospitals and the patients they serve.

TO: Members of the House Senior Health, Security & Retirement Committee

FROM: David Finkbeiner, Senior Vice President, Advocacy
Chris Mitchell, Manager, Government Relations

DATE: November 27, 2007

SUBJECT: House Bill 5259 – Mandatory Flu Vaccine for Hospital Inpatients 65 Years of Age or Older

The Michigan Health & Hospital Association (MHA) has declined to take a position on House Bill (HB) 5259, which would require hospitals to provide the influenza vaccine to all patients 65 and older when they are admitted to a hospital for 24 hours. While the association recognizes the importance of the flu vaccine for the elderly, the MHA strongly contends that there are hospital protocols currently in place addressing this public health issue; therefore, HB 5259 is duplicative and unnecessary.

On the federal level, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) annually conducts a national awareness campaign to educate the general public about the importance of influenza vaccination. As a critical public health issue, it is the CDC's mandate to inform at-risk populations about the importance of vaccination and provide useful information about where to get vaccinated. High risk groups include adults aged 65 and over, infants, pregnant women, children and adults with chronic medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease.

The group targeted by the CDC includes approximately 73 percent of the U.S. population, including those who care for and are in constant contact with the elderly.

As a part of CDC requirements, hospitals are mandated to report all flu vaccination data to the Hospital Quality Alliance. This data is publically available on the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Hospital Compare Web site. Furthermore, starting Sept. 1, 2006 this information is required for hospitals to be eligible for Medicare reimbursement from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

The MHA consistently supports public policy that improves the health status of Michigan residents. **Administration of the flu vaccine to elderly patients who request it and are healthy enough to receive it, has been a long-standing "best practice" in Michigan hospitals.** It should be noted that best practices in medicine are continually evolving; therefore, great caution should be taken in any attempt to legislate the practice of medicine. The MHA believes that current federal requirements accomplish what the proposed legislation is attempting to achieve. **We urge you to consider the necessity of HB 5259.**

Please contact Chris Mitchell (cmitchell@mha.org) at (517) 703-8622 at the MHA if you have further questions on this issue.

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